Welcome to the 11th edition of the Cotton Wrap!!

Dryland/ Irrigated Cotton
I thought I would share some findings from some work that we did with a few growers around Bellata with Mike Bange using the OZCOT crop simulation model (CSIRO Agriculture) to generate a few cotton scenarios. This model uses actual weather station data over the last 58yrs (rainfall 1957-2014) although for Bellata it adjusted numbers based on station recordings at Narrabri and Moree. Profile plant available water holding capacity and row configurations can be adjusted and for this soil we assumed 250mm under solid, single skip and double skip scenarios. Plant establishment was 8 plants per m in the row and adequate Nitrogen and other nutrients are assumed. Sicot 74BRF is the Variety type on 1m row spacing.

Sowing Window Analysis over 58 years (1957-2014)
Sowing window 15th Oct until 10th Dec.
- 30mm rainfall over 4 days – 79% chance of happening
- 15mm rainfall over 3 days – 91% chance of happening
- 30mm rainfall over 2 days – 74% chance of happening

GRDC Business Update
I dropped in to the GDC Business update last week where Saul Eslake told us that mining is in decline and we are already seeing improvements in other sectors with Tourism for one improving quickly. The dollar down to 65 US cents is a real possibility and his view on interest rates is for no further falls and increasing rates starting in 12-18mths. China is slowing but will still be a considerable contributer to global GDP and a rising middle class in Asia will demand more protein which will open up many opportunities for Australian Agriculture. There will be a need for an additional $500bn in capital required though and this will have to come through foreign sources and increasingly more innovative business structures. Unemployment in Australia appears to be stabilising which is why interest rates will not be reduced.

Basil Doonan says be profitable in a small scale then expand and don’t expect economies of scale to be the answer to profitability. The value of your labour now contributes around 30% to profit and this has increased markedly over the last 10 years and this will become more important in the next 10 so capitalising on labour force efficiency will be a key profit driver however skill development training is still very much overlooked.

The transition from family farm to a business orientation continues to challenge many business’s.

Mark McKeon tells us that stress is not the problem, the problem is the lack of recovery and owners and workers need to ‘switch off’. To assist with this and also help us stay young in order of importance we need to-
1. Stay connected with people
2. Have passions and hobbies
3. Sleep well
4. Take at least 2 solid weeks holiday at least once per year.

Trials
The cover cropping trial at Paul Slack’s property continues to progress with Nitrogen being spread last week. The summer component will be planted within the next 2 months weather permitting.
Cover cropping trial at “Belvedere” Moree.

**Around the Traps**

A big day at Weebollabolla oval in Moree last Saturday saw Narrabri Blue Boars defend their title in the Rugby against archrivals Moree 30-20 in a hard fought win. Moree also seemed to miss out largely on the latest rainfall event with only some good falls of 100mm east of Gurley and down to Berrigal Crk. Falls of 90mm were recorded in some areas around Bingara with some good flows in the Gwydir reported. A general 25-50mm around Bellata and to the East. Some parts around Burren Junction received 50-70mm and more like 25mm at Walgett, 18mm fall recorded at Rowena.

Phil Christie had a handy crop west of Bellata.

South of Walgett missed out and the Liverpool plains was more in the 25mm category as well. East of Narrabri did well with 50-85mm recorded throughout this area. Crops have benefited greatly as cold temperatures and frosts were beginning to take a toll but some hail severely damaged some wheat and faba crops east of Narrabri and east of Gurley.

Hail damage to Faba beans at “Warilea” Narrabri.

Emerald has finally seen some rain albeit patchy and light but with a very dry winter anything is a good start. Planting begins next week.

**Grower Profile**

Aaron Kiely “Denliza Downs” Emerald, Qld.

Tell us about yourself and how long you have been farming? Farming since leaving school in 1998, I have 2 children and my wife Carly. I farm 1350 acres of irrigation 10km east of Emerald with water from the dam delivered via the channel scheme. We have centre pivot and flood irrigation where we grow peanuts, purple wheat, corn, chickpeas and cotton plus Dad manages around 40 head of cattle. I completed primary school in Emerald then High School boarding at St Brendans in Yeppoon.

What are your hobbies? My hobbies include Tennis, Cricket and V8 Supercars.

What keeps you awake at night? Irrigation, channel blow outs, changing water and kids.

What would you be doing if not in Agriculture? A Vet.

What are your biggest challenges in growing cotton in Emerald? Plant establishment and crustung.
What’s On
8th-10th Sept Australian Cotton Research Conference at USQ, Toowoomba.
16th Sept WHS Workshop in Wee Waa, Contact Paul Sloman 0448 094 883.
23rd Sept Dryland Cotton Field day at Rowena. Contact me or Ben Dawson.

Sayings of the Month
“If I asked people what they wanted they would have said faster horses” Henry Ford
The Essence of Mental Toughness. “Is the ability to focus only on the very next thing, the thing that’s right in front of you” Justin Langer.

Welshy’s Weather
An interesting situation with a record breaking El Niño predicted later in 2015, yet growers reporting rain virtually ‘on demand’ when crops and pastures begin to show signs of stress.
A timely reminder of pioneering research by McBride and Nicholls (1983) that El Niño Southern Oscillation only accounts for 50% of year to year variability and there are other factors driving our climate. The positive Southern Annular Mode has really kept us in the game in NSW in terms of atmospheric moisture supply and cooler temperatures. Looking through the next four week period, there is no rain events showing up on refreshed multi-week models. On a more favourable note, temperatures are set to stay cooler than normal and the SAM is predicted to stay positive. The Coral Sea, Tasman Sea and southern Indian Ocean have all warmed in recent weeks, once again contrary to the El Niño signal in the equatorial Pacific. Recent studies have shown local sea temperatures are a key driver of our wet season precipitation.
Entering spring planting always useful to keep one eye on the SAM as well as model outputs, as this is the dominant driver of moisture to much of the central northern NSW grain belt;
http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/precip/CWlink/daily_aao_index/aao/aao.sprd2.gif

See below the SAM models.

Does anyone know where this photo is taken????

Until next time

Cheers
Geoff